

REMARKS

Applicant acknowledges with appreciation that the Examiner indicates that claims 3 - 10 would be allowable if rewritten in independent format, including the limitations of their base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant is amending claim 1. Therefore, claims 1-10 currently are pending and are subject to examination in the above-captioned patent application. Reconsideration of the above-captioned patent application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

The Examiner rejected claims 1 and 2 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e), as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,385,091 to Pekny. To the extent that this rejection remains applicable in view of the foregoing amendments, Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection, as follows.

Applicant has amended independent claim 1 to describe a nonvolatile semiconductor memory device, comprising: "a plurality of blocks each having a memory cell array; . . . a plurality of reference load circuits, each of which is provided in each of said plurality of blocks, and imposes a load on the reference signal that is identical to a load imposed on data that is read from said memory cell array; and a plurality of sensing circuits, each of which is provided in each of said plurality of blocks, and compares the data with the reference signal having the load imposed thereon by said reference load circuit so as to sense the data." Thus, in Applicant's claimed invention, the reference load circuits are each provided in a separate block for the purpose of imposing a load on the reference signal that is identical to a load imposed on data that is read from the memory cell array. Moreover, a sensing circuit in each block compares the data with the reference signal having the load imposed thereon so as to sense the data. In this manner, the claimed reference load circuits are each provided in a

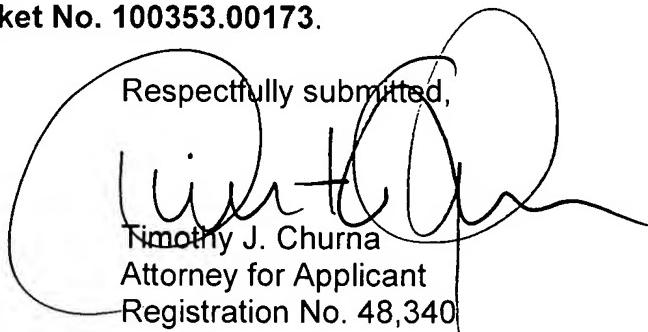
separate block, and serve to impose a load on the reference signal that is to be compared with data.

In contrast, as shown in Fig. 5 of Pekny, and as described in a relevant portion (column 6, lines 33-55) of Pekny, the reference load circuit 300 is **not** provided in **each** block, but merely is provided in one particular block (i.e., the block for Vx(19)). This is because Pekny is aimed at making the current load on the reference word line approximately match the current load on a word line, and it suffices to refer to only one word line for that purpose. As such, the reference load circuit of Pekny is only provided in one particular block, and serves to impose a load on a reference word line (that is not to be compared with data). Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the anticipation rejection of claim 1 at least for this reason.

Claim 2 dependent from allowable independent claim 1. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the anticipation rejection of claim 2 at least for this reason.

CONCLUSION

Applicant respectfully submits that the above-captioned patent application is in condition for allowance, and such action is earnestly solicited. If the Examiner believes that an in-person or telephonic interview with Applicant's representatives would expedite the prosecution of the above-captioned patent application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney of records. Applicant is enclosing a check in the amount of \$120.00 covering the requisite large entity fee for a petition for a one-month extension of time. Nevertheless, in the event of any variance between the fees determined by Applicant and those determined by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, please charge any such variance to the undersigned's Deposit Account No. 01-2300 referencing **Attorney Docket No. 100353.00173**.

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy J. Churna
Attorney for Applicant
Registration No. 48,340

Customer No. 004372

AREN'T FOX PLLC
1050 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20036-5339
Telephone No. (202) 857-6000
Facsimile No. (202) 638-4810

CMM/TJC:kf